

Transforming Joint Interagency Coordination:

The Missing Link Between National Strategy & Operational Success

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Introduction

Increased speed of action, enhanced depth of planning, and innovative management of resources have long been considered by many in the national security establishment to be critical in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous world of asymmetric terrorist threats. With the proliferation of non-state actors with global reach and their willingness to use weapons of ever-increasing lethality, solutions to the problems of the 21st century became less and less likely to reside within the capabilities of a single agency or department—even where that department possesses superb military forces, unparalleled information-collection assets, and dedicated intelligence analysts. Yet, in the fall of 2001, the United States in general and the Department of Defense (DOD) in particular suffered from an almost systemic and often self-imposed lack of coordination and information sharing among governmental agencies. Thus it was that on September 11, 2001, 19 terrorists hijacked 4 planes, murdering at least 2,973 men, women, and children from 70 countries.¹

The success of the attacks and the growing dangers represented by disenfranchised extremists demonstrated the need for a new approach to the application of all of the elements of national power. In a world increasingly dominated by the need for the swift identification, integration, and use of the capabilities of multiple agencies, effective interagency coordination has emerged as the best way to defeat today's threats. By harmonizing otherwise isolated governmental actions through the facilitation of synchronized planning at multiple levels from multiple perspectives, interagency coordination has the potential to address operational planning deficiencies that have historically undermined mission success in complex contingencies. In theory, then, robust and sufficiently staffed, resourced, and authorized interagency coordination organizations provide the promise of enhanced decision-making speed and increased plan breadth, thereby leading to rapid, integrated solutions.

Immediately after the September 11 attacks, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) put the theory to the test by creating the first combatant-command-level Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG). It was a single step, but it was an order of magnitude greater than any prior attempt. In order to examine the effectiveness of interagency coordination as a force multiplier, this case study traces the development of the CENTCOM JIACG through two wars. In so doing, this study explores whether a transformation within DOD toward better and institutionalized interagency coordination at the operational level can reduce the likelihood of future terrorist attacks and lead to comprehensive plans that represent, leverage, and synchronize all the elements of national power throughout all phases of conflict, from planning and war to stability and reconstruction.

¹ *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

Pre-September 11, 2001

Prior to September 11, 2001, there was much discussion of, but little measurable action toward, better interagency coordination. Joint doctrine at the time was illustrative. For example, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)* had only one substantive reference to interagency coordination: “MOOTW will often involve other...agencies.”² And that reference was closely followed by a warning that assistance to other governmental agencies (OGAs) “does not alter the military chain of command.”³ While its companion publication, *Foreign Internal Defense (FID)*, did provide information concerning the employment of military forces in support of OGAs, its focus was not on true U.S. interagency coordination, but on U.S. operations “in support of host-nation efforts to combat lawlessness, subversion, and insurgency.”⁴ Moreover, based on the recommendation of Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), lead agency responsibilities for drafting the FID revision were transferred from the U.S. Army to Special Operations Command (SOCOM) in 2001.⁵ In other words, interagency coordination was viewed as something best suited for special operations.

Similarly, the “Interagency Coordination” chapter of *Joint Forces Capabilities* observed that “nonmilitary organizations provide valuable knowledge, expertise, and unique capabilities,”⁶ but stressed that OGAs should be studied, not to add depth to planning or to determine how military resources might assist U.S. missions, but “to capitalize on their [OGA’s] ...contributions as force multipliers” to DOD.⁷ Likewise, *Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning* noted that “[d]uring deliberate interagency planning, heavy...commander involvement...and coordination will be a key to success,”⁸ but did not explain how to effect such coordination. Even Joint Publication 3-08, titled *Interagency Coordination during Joint Operations*, which recommended creating interagency coordination cells, envisioned such cells as temporary and post-hoc, with no authority to plan beyond the present crisis. Further complicating matters, DOD required that all interagency coordination be conducted “in concert with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff.”⁹ Indeed, for acts of terrorism, the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) himself had to “personally oversee DOD responses.”¹⁰

DOD was not alone: every federal agency guarded its independence just as carefully—particularly near budget time—and each had its own set of databases that were neither

² *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War*, Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 16, 1995), IV-7.

³ *Ibid.*, IV-8.

⁴ Joint Staff (J7), *Program Directive for JP 3-07.1 for Foreign Internal Defense*, GENADMIN 282232Z Jun 02.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Joint Forces Capabilities*, Joint Publication 3-33 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 13, 1999), IV-1.

⁷ *Ibid.*, IV-2.

⁸ *Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning*, Joint Publication 5-00.1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 25, 2002), III-20.

⁹ *Interagency Coordination during Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-08 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, October 9, 1996), vol. 1, III-1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II-8.

cross-referenced nor easily accessed by other agencies. For example, on September 11, 2001, the United States had at least five different lists (under different names depending on the agency creating it) of its most wanted terrorists, none of which were cross-referenced.¹¹ Moreover, information sharing between DOD and OGAs—particularly between DOD and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—was often better than between agencies in the same department. For example, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), both of which fall under the Justice Department, have historically suffered sibling rivalry. In short, the prevailing culture among federal agencies was uniform: conduct interagency coordination, but tread carefully and check often with headquarters before doing anything substantive or binding. Interagency planning was, consequently, time-consumingly vertical. As noted in *Joint Vision 2020*, “[t]he primary challenge of interagency operations is to achieve unity of effort despite the diverse cultures, competing interests, and differing priorities of the participating organizations, many of whom guard their relative independence, freedom of action, and impartiality.”¹²

As a first step towards breaking down some of these barriers, President Bush issued *National Security Presidential Directive 1* (NSPD-1) in February 2001, replacing the prior administration’s 102 Interagency Working Groups (IWGs) with a three-tiered, stream-lined system. He confirmed the National Security Council (NSC) system as the official interagency-coordination process within the executive department for national security policies, assigned the NSC Principals (tier one) and Deputies (tier two) Committees as the senior interagency fora for national security policy issues, and established 17 NSC Policy Coordination Committees (PCCs) (tier three) as “the main day-to-day fora for interagency coordination of national security policy.”¹³ In this regard, NSPD-1 created 6 regional and 11 functional PCCs, including a Counter-Terrorism and National Preparedness PCC chaired by the National Security Advisor.¹⁴ Finally, NSPD-1 gave the Deputies Committee authority to “prescribe...the work of the NSC interagency groups.”¹⁵

Post September 11, 2001

In the aftermath of September 11, CENTCOM commander General Tommy Franks requested permission from the SECDEF and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to establish an interagency coordination cell. He also sought the Secretary’s assistance in soliciting participation from national-level agencies or, in the alternative, direct liaison authority with those agencies.¹⁶ On October 25, 2001, Mr. Rumsfeld authorized the creation of JIACGs at the combatant command level with broad theater

¹¹ The State Department’s TIPOFF program, the Federal Aviation Administration’s “No-Fly” list, and the CIA’s, FBI’s, and U.S. Customs Service’s individual watch lists.

¹² *Joint Vision 2020* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, June 2000), 26.

¹³ George W. Bush, *National Security Presidential Directive 1* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, February 13, 2001), 4.

¹⁴ On 24 April 2001, NSPD-2 added four functional PCCs and continued 55 of the IWGs as PCC sub-groups. As of July 2007, there were six regional and 25 functional PCCs.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Request for Joint Interagency Task Force*, GENADMIN 170124Z Oct 02.

campaign-planning responsibilities. He specifically notified commanders that coordination with the Deputies Committee had begun and that combatant commanders were authorized to “liaise directly with the appropriate agencies to explore needed capabilities and relationships to support theater counterterrorist operations.”¹⁷ The five unified commands approved to have JIACGs were the Central, European, Pacific, Southern, and Special Operations Commands. By logical extension, when Northern Command was later established, it was automatically granted those same permissions and authorities.¹⁸

General Franks immediately tasked Brigadier General Gary Harrell, then-Director of the CENTCOM Joint Security Directorate, with creating CENTCOM’s first interagency coordination cell. On November 20, 2001, the Deputy Commander, Lieutenant General Michael Delong, approved a Joint Interagency Task Force-Counterterrorism (JIATF-CT) with 30 military and as many U.S. agency personnel as could be recruited.¹⁹ Brigadier General Harrell put together a team, drawing some from CENTCOM (including the author of this study), but mostly from the special-forces community, and sent an advance team to Afghanistan the day after Thanksgiving 2001. The remainder deployed throughout December and, by the end of the year, JIATF-CT was fully functional. It had members from the CIA, DEA, FBI, Diplomatic Security Service, U.S. Customs Service, National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Defense Human Intelligence Service, the Justice, Treasury, and State Departments, and New York’s Joint Terrorism Task Force, among others.²⁰

Through a small detachment at CENTCOM headquarters in Tampa, Florida, JIATF-CT established and maintained real-time communications from the field to Washington. Functioning primarily as an intelligence-gathering fusion center, while at the same time jointly operating Afghanistan’s main interrogation facility in Bagram, JIATF-CT comprised 36 U.S. military, 57 non-DOD, and several British and Australian special-

¹⁷ Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Creation of Joint Interagency Coordination Groups*, GENADMIN 252050Z Oct 02. This was originally a secret message, but was later declassified by GENADMIN 061350Z Feb 02, 1. The quoted language, however, was unclassified in the message’s original release.

¹⁸ Eventually, all nine combatant commands were authorized to have JIACGs.

¹⁹ Gary L. Harrell, *Request for DCINC to approve JIATF structure*, Internal Staff Paper, CC Form 14, (MacDill Air Force Base: U.S. Central Command, November 14, 2002), 1.

²⁰ The concept of joint task forces, combining Federal, state, and local law enforcement capabilities, was first used by the FBI in New York City in 1979, due to an overwhelming number of bank robberies. After its initial success, it was expanded to the counterterrorism program and, in 1980, the first JTTF was established in New York City in response to the increasing number of terrorist bombings in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As of July 2007, there were 100 JTTFs in the United States—65 of which were formed after September 11, 2001, and each of which is tasked with organizing federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies in a coordinated manner for the purpose of detecting, preventing, and responding to domestic and international terrorist organizations or individuals who may threaten or attack United States citizens or interests abroad or conduct criminal activity within the United States. This includes any threat or incident involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) directed against the population or interests of the United States. The New York JTTF had conducted several significant terrorism investigations prior to 2001. These included the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole. Thus, much of the U.S. government’s corporate knowledge on al-Qaeda in 2001 was resident in New York’s JTTF.

forces personnel. Working side by side and sharing information, expertise, and resources, JIATF-CT achieved significant results: the detention and interrogation of several senior al-Qaeda members, the photographic identification of 11 of the “Top 25” Taliban and al-Qaeda participants sought by the United States, and the establishment of the first border-security program in Afghanistan using multiagency collection assets and biometric identification systems. Visiting in February 2002, CJCS General Richard Myers observed “this is exactly what the Secretary and I had in mind.”

Despite these successes, however, many at CENTCOM believed that JIATF-CT was limited, lacking the resources necessary either to develop theater-level or to shape national-level interagency strategy. Upon its return stateside in April 2002 after Operation *Anaconda*, JIATF-CT began to transform from an operation-specific unit into a comprehensive JIACG better able to wage the long-term global war on terror.

Inter-Bellum and the Transition to a JIACG

In contrast to the speed with which CENTCOM had formed and deployed its JIATF-CT, the interagency process inside the Washington beltway had crept along at a snail’s pace. Secretary Rumsfeld requested assistance from the Deputies Committee in October 2001, JIATF-CT deployed to Afghanistan in November 2001, and Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley twice solicited each agency’s “views on DOD’s proposal to augment selected [combatant commander] staffs with agency representatives” December 14 and 27, 2001.²¹ Yet it was not until January 29, 2002, that the Deputies Committee spoke, issuing a nonbinding memorandum on JIACGs. In a classic case of initiative preceding approval, the CIA, FBI, and Departments of Justice, Treasury, and State—each of which had already detailed personnel to JIATF-CT—supported the proposal and agreed to send people. Commerce and Energy also supported the proposal, but offered only a telephonic point of contact; FEMA expressed “no view.”²²

U.S. Customs, which would prove to be one of the most valued members of JIACG in Iraq for its superior databases and illicit-trafficking and terrorist-funding expertise, was not among the original agencies solicited. Nor did the Deputies Committee produce any memorandum of agreement (MOA) on JIACGs. While many observers believed that the agencies were understandably reluctant to formalize the assignment of personnel to DOD for an untested concept, this failure to achieve an MOA would later have an adverse impact on JIACG operations in Iraq.

Within days, the joint staff issued its first guidance.²³ Drawing largely on lessons learned in Afghanistan, the joint staff confirmed JIACG’s broad counterterrorism mission, but issued three specific prohibitions. First, JIACGs were prohibited from tasking non-DOD

²¹ Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor Steve Hadley, “DoD Proposal to Augment CINC Staffs,” Memorandum for NSC Deputies Committee, January 29, 2001, 2.

²² Ibid.

²³ Joint Staff (DJS), *Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs)*, GENADMIN 061350Z Feb 02 and Joint Staff (DJS), *Defense Agency Support for Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACGs)*, GENADMIN 072135Z Feb 02.

personnel assigned to any JIACG. Second, combatant commanders were warned that “establishing a JIACG does not alter existing lines of authority, lines of reporting, or coordination channels.”²⁴ In other words, JIACGs were not created to replace habitual relationships or traditional chains of command, but to strengthen already existing connectivity between agencies (and to establish such connectivity where none existed).

The concern was that these new JIACGs not violate the principles of unity of effort and unity of command. To achieve the former, multiple agencies coming at the same problem from their individual perspectives had to have a single, overarching, government-wide vision of the desired end state in order to solve that problem and achieve that end state. But to achieve the latter, each agency had to speak with one voice based on its own internal unifying vision—one that comes from the senior representatives (such as policy makers) of that agency and not, as feared by many in Washington, from individuals outside the beltway. Hence, the Joint Staff permitted JIACGs to execute and influence policy, but not to make it.

Finally, JIACGs were reminded by the Joint Staff that each combatant command’s Joint Intelligence Center (JIC) was still the office of primary responsibility (OPR) for the creation and dissemination of intelligence products.

Although many in DOD (and elsewhere) view the “interagency” as a single universe—albeit a large, unwieldy one—it is generally recognized that there are, in fact, three separate and disparate “interagencies,” comprising the intelligence, political-military, and law-enforcement communities.²⁵ Other than providing certain guidelines as indicated below, the Joint Staff did not specify which of the three interagency communities JIACGs would coordinate.

The intelligence community has historically included the CIA, DIA, National Security Agency, and others. At CENTCOM—as at most combatant commands—the information-collection and analytical capabilities of these agencies were managed in the JIC, while robust coordination with the CIA was conducted through the command’s special adviser, an assigned representative from the Director of Central Intelligence. The Chairman’s instruction was to continue using the JIC and CIA office as OPRs, but to supplement those capabilities with additional intelligence and CIA personnel assigned to JIACG.

The political-military community, overseeing traditional civil-military operations such as humanitarian assistance and refugee control, as well as security assistance and foreign military sales, was the responsibility of CENTCOM’s Plans Directorate (J-5) in coordination with the commander’s political adviser (POLAD), a State Department representative of ambassadorial rank. JIACG was instructed to broaden and improve these relationships, but—again—not to replace them.

²⁴ CJCS (J5), *Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) Update*, GENADMIN 221439Z Apr 02, 1.

²⁵ Viewing all of the agencies and departments of the executive branch as a single interagency community is as misleading as viewing the military as being composed of a single service.

The law-enforcement community, however, enjoyed no formal relationship with CENTCOM prior to JIACG. In large part, this was because of the command's concerns about violating either the Posse Comitatus Act²⁶ or intelligence oversight restrictions.²⁷ The task, therefore, within multiple interagency environments and while still maintaining the tactical synergy achieved in Afghanistan, was to transform the combat-tested JIATF-CT into a JIACG capable of developing the operational depth to coordinate theater-level planning and the strategic reach to shape national-level planning.

The ultimate objective was to provide the Commander with a standing capability specifically organized to add multiple-agency depth and bring multiple-agency innovation to operational plans in order to enhance the range of options available to the Commander across the full spectrum of conflict prevention, conflict response, and post-conflict restoration.

To achieve concurrence after months of debate and war-gaming within CENTCOM's staff, JIACG agreed to support other staffs in four functional areas: two within the political-military community (ambassadorial activities and civil-military operations) and two within the intelligence community (intelligence fusion and CIA-specific operational advice). But it was specifically agreed that JIACG would take the lead on counterterrorism-related initiatives within the law-enforcement community. With this agreement in hand, JIACG's proposed mission and force structure of 26 military positions were approved in September 2002.²⁸ Thereafter, reporting directly to then-Major General Victor E. Renuart Jr., who was dual-hatted as the Director of both the Operations Directorate and JIACG, the unit began developing a concept of operations based on five core principles designed to provide multiple-agency perspective, depth, and resources to the commander.

As a first principle, and rather than establishing another working group, JIACG chose to provide a representative to every major planning cell in the command. Because there

²⁶ The Posse Comitatus Act, an 1878 law prohibiting using the Army to "execute the laws," except where authorized by the U.S. Constitution or Congress, 18 U.S. Code 1385, applies to the Air Force by amendment (1956) and the Navy by DOD regulation, 32 C.F.R. Section 213.2 (1992). Federal military personnel operating pursuant to presidential power to quell domestic violence and National Guard forces operating under Title 32 state authority are exempt from the act. Moreover, under 1981 amendments, 10 U.S. Code 371-78, supportive and technical assistance, such as the use of facilities, vessels, aircraft, intelligence, technological aids, and surveillance, are permitted. Only direct participation of DOD personnel in such activities as searches, seizures, and arrests are prohibited. Contrary to popular belief, the act itself contains no prohibition against military receiving law-enforcement-generated information

²⁷ Intelligence oversight is regulated by Executive Order 12333, with implementing policy in DOD 5240 1-R. Again contrary to popular belief, military intelligence components may collect information on U.S. persons—but only when that component has the mission to do so, the information falls within a specified category (notably foreign intelligence and counter-intelligence), and the U.S. persons are reasonably believed to be engaged in terrorist activities. If that collection occurs within the United States, there must also be a connection with a foreign power or organization

²⁸ "JIACG facilitates planning by Commander, U.S. Central Command, and staff; coordinates information sharing between U.S. military and U.S. governmental agencies; and advises the Commander, U.S. Central Command, and staff on interagency issues in the execution of U.S. Central Command's mission." Matthew F. Bogdanos, *Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) Mission*, CCJIACG Position Paper (MacDill Air Force Base: U.S. Central Command, September 17, 2002), 1.

were not enough agency representatives to attend every meeting, JIACG trained its military personnel in the missions, capabilities, and limitations of a dozen agencies and assigned them to specific cells. While this was labor-intensive—each JIACG officer was assigned to several cells—such omnipresent and proactive participation gave rise to grass-roots interagency coordination. Prior to JIACG, a plan was usually in final draft before it was approved to be seen by other agencies—a process many viewed as frequently self-defeating and always time-consuming. Through JIACG, however, all relevant agencies participated in the plan’s actual development. While non-DOD representatives could not officially speak for their parent agencies—that would have stepped into the prohibited realm of policymaking—they could and did offer unofficial input by virtue of their expertise as members of their agencies. Representatives also conducted informal coordination within their parent agencies in advance of the plan’s release, enabling them to advise CENTCOM of what that particular agency’s official position would ultimately be. This frequently allowed planners to resolve issues before the issues “officially” existed.

The second principle—that mission accomplishment, not pride of ownership, had to be the benchmark for any initiative—was designed to ensure that non-military-developed ideas received the same consideration as those generated by the military. Every product from JIACG was released for staffing and review within CENTCOM without indicating whether DOD or another agency had proposed it. Each JIACG member then served as a zealous advocate for that plan as drafted. This honest-broker principle often enabled both non-military and military members to convince their respective commands to accept such proposals over initial objections.

The third principle was to establish robust information-sharing procedures to manage the flow of information within JIACG. The imperative was to avoid the operational failures inevitably associated with functioning in insular information stovepipes. Because everyone in JIACG operated on the same network and had the same top-secret security clearance, two significant impediments to information sharing were removed. To complete the transformation, however, JIACG enforced an “everybody or nobody” approach that was not just a catchy phrase but a core value. Every member of JIACG—both military and non-military—was required to send all messages, reports, and cables to every other member. Moreover, by making available the results produced from each agency’s information-collection assets and establishing direct access to each agency’s databases, JIACG established an unprecedented flow of DOD- and non-DOD-generated information among agencies. Because most law-enforcement agencies operate proprietary software on incompatible networks, an unexpected advantage was that JIACG also provided agencies a forum for receiving information generated by other agencies. Thus, such agencies as U.S. Customs, the Secret Service, and the FBI often learned more about each others’ activities through their JIACG members than through traditional channels.

Because CENTCOM’s forces were spread over the globe, as a fourth principle, JIACG provided both interagency-trained liaison officers and task-organized teams to those forces. Varying in size, a team could have interrogators, interpreters, computer-forensic

experts, financial analysts, or document examiners from the CIA, FBI, DEA, and Treasury. This export of liaison officers and mini-JIACGs was designed to bring the same force-multiplying benefits to subordinate commands that JIACG brought to CENTCOM. Operating at the tactical level with robust communications assets, those teams often developed actionable intelligence that would otherwise have been beyond the information-gathering ability of the unit's organic intelligence assets.

Finally, because of geographic dispersion, each member of JIACG, military and non-military, was required to prepare a situation report listing the day's events and future initiatives. Used to ensure that each member's (and, hence, agency's) actions were consistent with the overall campaign plan, its real value lay in its dissemination by each member to each member. Such JIACG-wide situational awareness avoided duplication of effort and generated collaborative, multi-agency solutions to every initiative.

Iraq and the JIACG

After the mission and concept of operations were approved within the command, there followed months of briefings at a dozen agencies to enlist their support for what would become Operation *Iraqi Freedom*. Because there was still no formal agreement, any agency's support had to be voluntary. The challenge was to convince them to "volunteer." Joint Publication 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, suggests using "committees, steering groups, or interagency working groups organized by functional needs" to achieve desired goals.²⁹ But without the luxury of time that process entails and without the sense of necessity that might have been created by a formal MOA, the process of soliciting assistance for Iraq depended exclusively on the persuasiveness, commitment, and credibility of the individuals involved: both those who were doing the asking and those whom were being asked.

The solicitation process also required knowledge, especially knowledge of each agency's core competencies. Recognizing that in order to request the right number, seniority, and skill sets of representatives from the right agency required knowing which agency did what best, members of JIACG began studying each agency's culture, method of operation, internal metrics for measuring success, and other things. Frequently, this meant reviewing each agency or department head's budget testimony before congress to determine what that particular agency or department valued most. It also required advance scouting to determine who in each agency's hierarchy might accept the novel JIACG concept as well as who (usually a different person) had the authority to approve it. Multiple briefs to the same agency up the hierarchy were standard. Based on the information acquired, JIACG then tailored each request to that agency's objectives, capabilities, and personalities. This approach enabled each agency to provide teams to CENTCOM that were properly organized and resourced for CENTCOM's and the parent agency's missions.³⁰

²⁹ *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations, Joint Publication 5-0, Second Draft (2002), II-14.*

³⁰ With rare exceptions, overseas deployments of non-DOD executive branch employees must be voluntary. In the absence of any MOA mandating minimum tour lengths—and in order to generate sufficient

The issue of command was more difficult. Under the Chairman's guidance, DOD could not task other agencies—generally considered a reasonable constraint in a headquarters setting, but viewed as unworkable in combat. The unofficial agreement reached between the CENTCOM JIACG and each of the participating agencies was that each agency's headquarters would retain tasking authority (in DOD terms, operational control) of all of its deployed members, but that the senior JIACG military member in the field would have direction and control of all movements of assigned members (in DOD terms, tactical control) necessary to accomplish whatever tasks were assigned to those members.

Concerned that all JIACG members comply with the Geneva Convention and its Hague Protocols as well, it was also agreed that all deploying civilians would wear desert camouflage uniforms (without rank insignia) and carry DOD-issued identification.³¹

Among the many issues addressed, however, the one that drew the most heated debate was that concerning firearms and ammunition. OGAs argued that because their members were expected to operate in a combat zone, they should carry the firearms on which they had previously trained during their law-enforcement careers. FBI agents, for example, carry .40 pistols. Military logistical planners, on the other hand, pointed out the challenges of resupply presented by having so many different weapons systems and calibers in a single unit. Ultimately, it was decided that each non-military member would deploy with his parent agency's standard-issue weapons, despite the logistical challenges created.

By the time CENTCOM completed preparations and moved its forward headquarters to Qatar in February 2003, JIACG had grown to 28 military and 54 non-military members, adding the Department of Energy, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, the Internal Revenue Service, and the State Department's International Information Programs. While the coalition advanced north in late March, the JIACG team entered Umm Qasr with unprecedented tasks in a combat zone: to search for evidence identifying terrorist-financing networks and terrorist activity in the United States, to investigate UN Security Council Resolution violations, and to initiate criminal investigations of U.S. and foreign individuals who violated any trade embargos or aided Iraq's WMD programs. Operating throughout Iraq from Basra and Baghdad to Kirkuk and Mosul, JIACG continued to engage in a full range of activities: drafting the DOD rewards program for information about prohibited materials

volunteers—most OGAs were forced to limit deployments depending on the number of volunteers. For example, by limiting tour length to 90 days, the FBI was able to provide 17 agents for the first rotation—later expanding that to a high of 89 agents and analysts in early 2004. That 90-day limit quickly acquired the force of precedent, and most other agencies followed suit. There were exceptions, however. Initially, the State Department was forced to limit rotations in Afghanistan to 30 days, while the Energy Department limited its single deployment to Iraq to 45 days.

³¹ Under article 4 of the *Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, adopted on August 12, 1949 by the Diplomatic Conference for the Establishment of International Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War, held in Geneva from April 21 to August 12, 1949, and entered into force on October 21, 1950, in order for "persons who accompany the armed forces without actually being members thereof" to be entitled to protected status as prisoners of war, they must "have received authorization from the armed forces which they accompany, who shall provide them for that purpose with an identity card similar to" that used by the uniformed armed forces.

or high-value individuals, investigating stolen Iraqi antiquities (ultimately recovering more than 5,000 priceless artifacts in 8 countries), conducting crime-scene examinations of all bombings with U.S. civilian casualties, and uncovering Saddam Hussein's schemes for financing illicit operations, to include the oil-for-food program.

In addition to these, there were many other tasks for which traditional military forces were less than ideally suited and requested the assistance of JIACG teams: the detention by coalition forces of a combatant claiming to be a U.S. citizen, a foreign fighter found to be carrying an American telephone number, the discovery of UN-banned weapons with shipping documents, the recovery of prohibited equipment of foreign origin, the seizure of large amounts of U.S. currency, and the receipt of information on potential attacks in the United States.

One of the most challenging tasks for JIACG in Iraq, however, was triggered by the transfer of Iraqi sovereignty and the concomitant establishment of the U.S. Embassy on June 28, 2004. Because the State Department is the lead Federal agency for carrying out U.S. foreign policy, the Ambassador—the President's personal representative and senior U.S. official in any foreign country—directs all U.S. Government activities and personnel in that country other than military members operating under a combatant commander. The Ambassador is also responsible for approving U.S. Government strategy for that country, set forth in the mission performance plan prepared annually by the U.S. Embassy's country team, a standing interagency committee comprising the senior members of virtually every U.S. agency in that country.

As the combatant commander's equivalent of a country team, one of JIACG's usual functions is to ensure unity of effort between the combatant commander's theater-wide strategy and the Ambassador's country-specific mission performance plan. In Iraq (as in Afghanistan the previous year) however, JIACG deployed prior to the establishment of a U.S. Embassy. Thus, it functioned as the *de facto* country team and—initially, at least—assumed responsibility for all non-DOD law-enforcement agents in country. The challenge in both countries, then, was how to effect a seamless transition to U.S. Embassy control of interagency operations. Ultimately, it was decided that the transition would be on an agency-by-agency basis, rather than on a particular date. In other words, once each agency determined that it had sufficient personnel and resources in country to assume its responsibilities, it notified both the Ambassador and JIACG of that readiness, and the hand-off was conducted.

Post-Iraq

While JIACG was being tested in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Joint Staff conducted an assessment in April 2003, finding that JIACGs “integrated . . . U.S. Government objectives in each region, and created a forum for . . . interagency operational planning and coordination.”³² JFCOM conducted its own assessment, noting that “JIACG has

³² Joint Staff (DJS), *Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) Assessment*, GENADMIN 010947ZApr02, 3.

gained universal acceptance.”³³ Based on these findings, Deputy SECDEF Paul Wolfowitz then notified Deputy National Security Adviser Hadley in August 2003 that “all participating Federal agencies and host combatant commands voiced strong support for the [JIACG] initiative.”³⁴ As a result, in October 2003, the Chairman tasked the National Defense University (NDU) to develop an operational-level, interagency education program.³⁵ Returning from Iraq in summer 2004, the author of this case study was detailed to NDU to assist in developing this program. In February 2005, the first executive-branch-wide, operational-level, interagency educational course ever offered by the U.S. Government was conducted at NDU and attended by 136 participants from 18 different departments, agencies, and components, including most Federal agencies involved in national security affairs and all nine combatant commands.

On December 24, 2003, DOD formally requested—and agreed to pay for—“staff-experienced individuals” from the State Department, the FBI’s Counter-Terrorism Division, and Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control to “provide staff support to ...JIACGs.”³⁶ The request, which did not include the CIA because of its already robust participation at the combatant commands, was for an initial assignment of one year—extendable to a second. Although the decision was lauded by some within the interagency community as an important step in formalizing the JIACG concept, many others voiced significant concerns. For one, none of the JIACGs were asked to comment on the decision before it was made. It was simply presented to each combatant command as a *fait accompli*. Until this funding decision, and within broad guidelines, each combatant commander had always been encouraged to design a JIACG to meet the command’s specific needs. The FBI and the State and Treasury Departments are undeniably valuable, but so—argued the commanders—are others, failing to understand why each command had not been permitted to choose its funded agencies. A second concern was the possible effect on the non-reimbursed agencies, each of which became predictably less inclined to continue providing representatives for JIACGs free of charge after they learned they did not make the final cut for funding purposes.

Meanwhile, JFCOM was developing new doctrine and attempting to reconcile the conflicting visions about how best to conduct interagency coordination at the combatant command. Some, particularly in the Intelligence (J-2) and Plans (J-5) Directorates that

³³ Joint Forces Command, *Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) Initial Concept of Operations*, Draft Prototype Version 1.0, February 27, 2004, 6.

³⁴ Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, “Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) Assessment,” Memorandum for the Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor, August 19, 2003, 1.

³⁵ CJCS Richard B. Myers, “Development of Joint Interagency Coordination Group Education Program,” Memorandum for the President, National Defense University, October 29, 2003, 1.

³⁶ Executive Secretary for the Department of Defense William P. Marriot issued three identical memoranda on 24 December 2003: “Assignment of Federal Bureau of Investigation (Counter-terrorism) Representatives to U.S. Combatant Commands,” Memorandum for the Executive Secretary for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Counter-terrorism); “Assignment of Department of State Representatives to U.S. Combatant Commands,” Memorandum for the Executive Secretary for the Department of State; and “Assignment of Department of Treasury Representatives (Office of Foreign Assets Control) to U.S. Combatant Commands,” Memorandum for the Executive Secretary for the Department of Treasury Representatives (Office of Foreign Assets Control).

had long been conducting interagency coordination in their narrowly focused worlds at CENTCOM proposed that JIACG should be nothing more than a facilitator for the interagency activities of other staff sections. Concerned about losing traditional roles and missions, they believed the prior world of information stovepipes only needed improved technology and additional personnel to become fully functional.

The special-forces community, pointing to the successes in Afghanistan, maintained that JIACGs should operate as task forces in the covert world at the tactical level. For example, they emphasized the benefits of an interagency-coordinated interrogation, postulating the synergistic effect on a terrorist who, within hours of capture, is told that the State Department has his visa application from Yemen, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has his entry stamp in Los Angeles a month later, the Federal Aviation Administration has the ticket of his subsequent flight to New York without luggage, and Treasury has seized his bank account—as the FBI plays a recording from his last telephone conversation. But such proponents had no answer to the critics who pointed out the lack of operational planning capability and the inability to shape national-level strategy.

Initially, JFCOM proposed “a small interagency coordination staff element comprised [sic] mostly of civilian[s]...as a staff directorate of 12.”³⁷ Critics—of whom there were many—contended that such a small, specialized directorate would become nothing more than a think tank quickly marginalized by the high-speed, results-based staffs of combatant commanders engaged in the global war on terrorism. Active practitioners of interagency coordination at the operational level viewed JFCOM’s initial version of JIACG as unlikely to produce anything except good concept papers, arguing that just as purely military planning cells are obsolete, purely civilian cells are no less so.

JFCOM appeared to have heard the virtually unanimous complaints, but only partly. In the final version of Joint Publication 3-08, entitled “Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization, and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination During Joint Operations,” approved on March 17, 2006, JFCOM proposed a notional core staffing of 12 members comprising three military personnel, three DOD-contracted civilians (including the Director), two foreign service officers from the State Department, and one representative each from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Justice, Homeland Security, and Transportation Departments. In other words, JFCOM’s vision of interagency coordination includes no representatives from the Treasury Department or the U.S. Secret Service, none from the FBI, DEA, CIA, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Customs and Border Protection (CPB).³⁸

³⁷ JFCOM, *Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) Initial Concept of Operations*, Draft Prototype Version 1.0, February 27, 2004, 9.

³⁸ Non-DOD members of the executive branch recognize the obvious: to suggest that having someone from the Justice Department is the functional equivalent for planning and expertise purposes to having someone from the FBI and the DEA or that having someone from Homeland Security is the functional equivalent for planning and expertise purposes to having someone from ICE and CBP is exactly the same as arguing that having a civilian representative from the Office of the Secretary of Defense is the functional equivalent for planning and expertise to having someone from the U.S. Marine Corps or U.S. Air Force or any of the uniformed military services.

The Future of Interagency Coordination

The United States faces the same challenges with interagency coordination today that the military faced with joint doctrine in 1986, when Congress, weary of competing service cultures and institutionally driven intransigence, passed the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The primary source of the most pressing challenges is the lack of a single, national-level organization issuing guidance, managing competing agency policies, and directing agency participation in JIACGs. In the alternative, an often-proposed solution is to adopt the “lead Federal agency” concept, under which, for each specific task, a particular agency or department has the lead. But under this concept, supporting agencies can still refuse to participate in specific operations, as often happens within the law-enforcement community during joint investigations. Many question whether such non-compulsory concepts are as well suited to the hostile environments in which DOD operates as are the more formal command and control relationships—particularly since history has shown that unity of effort is difficult in complex contingencies without unity of command. To put it another way, although differing agency viewpoints add depth to any plan, experience has shown that there is a fine line between principled adherence to core values and unproductive intransigence, with every agency often guilty of the latter.³⁹

This absence of unity of command has had several consequences. The first is that there is no single standard directing when individual agencies must begin interagency participation in their crisis- or deliberate-planning processes. Many senior decision-makers within each agency, particularly within DOD, argue that interagency coordination, at whatever level conducted, necessarily implicates policy. They generally agree that the traditional vertical planning process may be slower and more cumbersome, but counter that the vertical process enables them to analyze the policy implications of any plan before releasing it to other agencies. In other words, reluctant to offer other agencies multiple points of entry into their internal decision-making process, they prefer to address interagency disagreements only once: at the policymaker level inside the beltway.

On the other hand, many operational-level planners argue that interagency coordination should be conducted as early as possible so that potential conflicts can be resolved as quickly as possible. They contend that the solution to the policy-making concern is not centralization of interagency coordination at the highest levels of government, but a standardized interagency planning process developed by the NSC and clearer inter- and intra-agency guidance derived from the National Security Strategy.⁴⁰ This would enable

³⁹ In order to ensure unity of effort among the individual staff directorates and to enhance direct coordination with the senior-level non-DOD representatives necessary for JIACG operations at CENTCOM, its JIACG began reporting directly to the Deputy Commander in July 2004. The following month, and in order to achieve consensus and overall direction on its interagency activities, CENTCOM established an interagency executive steering group to function as an operational-level PCC. Chaired by the deputy commander, co-chaired by the command’s POLAD, and staffed by the command’s directors and senior DOD and other agency representatives, this group was intended to guide the command’s interagency policy, review and initiate major interagency proposals, and manage competing priorities.

⁴⁰ To be more precise, proponents argue that the process should be developed by the NSC staff and—to carry sufficient weight—approved by the NSC.

horizontal interagency planning to be performed simultaneously at the tactical (task force), operational (combatant command), and strategic (Joint Staff) levels.

A second consequence of the absence of unity of command is the lack of government-wide standards for information sharing among agencies—resulting in the current ad-hoc, personality-dependent form of information sharing among agencies. Although many look to the NSC as the only entity with the authority to establish and enforce minimum standards of information sharing at the appropriate classification level, the issue is also practical: the lack of a communications architecture linking the agencies.⁴¹ While collaborative technology that can link agencies along a trusted information network already exists, no agencies have been directed (and few have the resources) to install such systems. A practical interim solution that has been suggested is to establish a secure domain, like the secret Internet protocol router network (SIPRNET), dedicated to interagency coordination at each agency. That would require DOD funding of computers, wiring, and related equipment, but it would also allow time to develop and install efficient and user-friendly networks that satisfy still-yet-to-be-established standardized security protections.

The final consequence is insufficient staffing. When Secretary Rumsfeld authorized JIACGs in 2001, DOD created no additional positions. Each commander, therefore, had to staff JIACG by reassigning personnel from within an already understaffed command. CENTCOM's solution was to create temporary wartime JIACG positions using mobilized Reservists, usually found by JIACG members combing the Ready Reserve lists for familiar names. Because many Reservists work in law-enforcement in their civilian jobs, JIACG's recalled reservists provided an unanticipated source of success through the two-for-one leveraging of their military and law-enforcement experience and contacts. But that pool is almost dry, and the joint manning document still does not include JIACG positions.⁴² Non-DOD agencies face similar staffing issues. Many critics argue that the only solution is for the NSC (or the U.S. Congress) to create a joint interagency designation similar to the DOD joint-specialty officer designation, requiring attendance by military and non-military members at an interagency education program designed by NDU.⁴³

⁴¹ The goal would be to protect the sources and methods from which the information derives while still mandating robust information exchange. One possible option is to replace the current practice of having different agencies manage individual security-clearance procedures for their own members with one in which a single agency is responsible for establishing, providing, and maintaining all clearances within the Federal Government.

⁴² This is problematic for any JIACGs trying to maintain the operational tempo necessary to defeat today's asymmetric threats. The CENTCOM JIACG military members, for example, served as planners in all major planning cells within the command; as detachment commanders when task-organized JIACG teams deployed throughout the world; as liaison officers providing interagency connectivity with subordinate command staffs and U.S. Embassies; and as mentors, training JIACG civilians on military missions, capabilities, and limitations.

⁴³ See, e.g., Bogdanos, M., "Joint Interagency Cooperation: The First Steps," *Joint Force Quarterly*, March 2005. On 17 May 2007, President George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13434, "National Security Professional Development," directing the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (APHS/CT) to develop a "National Strategy for the Development of Security Professionals." Approved in July 2007, the strategy adopted a three-tiered framework built upon education

In the beginning of the last century, the world was presented with a new threat: fascist states with global ambitions. In response, a few dedicated visionaries developed a method of warfare that would eventually be tested and perfected in the South Pacific.⁴⁴ On a September morning in the beginning of this century, the world was presented with yet another threat. Like the fascism it has much in common with, today's asymmetric terrorist threat requires innovation, breadth of vision, speed of action, and management of resources that can be achieved only by synchronizing all the elements of national power through integrated multiagency operations. In the global war on terrorism, interagency operations hold the same promise that amphibious operations did a century ago: victory.

(through a yet-to-be-established phased interagency education system), training (by means of programs and exercises), and professional experience (enhanced by interagency and inter-governmental assignments and exchanges). It stopped short, however, of establishing an interagency or national security designation. Nor did it follow Goldwater-Nichols in requiring such interagency assignments for promotion and advancement.

⁴⁴ In January 1934, Col Ellis B. Miller's Quantico working group published the first doctrine for amphibious warfare, entitled "Tentative Manual for Landing Operations."

Instructor's Guide to Transforming Joint Interagency Coordination

Issues for Discussion

Unity of Effort

1. Should there be a single, national-level organization issuing guidance, managing competing agency policies, and directing agency participation in JIACGs? If so, should that organization be the NSC or some other agency?
2. Does the concept of lead Federal agency hold promise for greater joint interagency coordination in the absence of a more pro-active NSC? If not, is there another way to achieve unity of effort without the NSC?
3. Does interagency coordination differ at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels to the extent that it requires different sets of controls and procedures?
4. Should the NSC create a joint interagency designation similar to the DOD joint-specialty officer designation, requiring attendance by military and non-military members at an interagency education program designed by the National Defense University?
5. If such a designation is created, should it and (or) an interagency tour be required for promotion to the most senior levels of government?

Interagency Planning

6. Should the NSC (or any other organization) establish a standardized interagency planning process for the executive branch? If so, what should it look like?
7. Does interagency coordination, at whatever level conducted, necessarily implicate policy? If so, is that a sufficient reason to maintain the traditional vertical planning process?
8. Is there a way to empower interagency coordination at the lowest levels without implicating policy? If not, is there a way in which to permit simultaneous horizontal interagency coordination and planning while still keeping policy at the highest levels of each agency?

Information Sharing

9. Should the NSC (or any other organization) establish and enforce minimum standards of information sharing at the appropriate classification level?
10. Should there be a secure domain, like the secret Internet protocol router network (SIPRNET), dedicated to interagency coordination at each agency?
11. Should the U.S. Government replace the current practice of different agencies having individual security-clearance procedures with one in which a single agency is responsible for establishing, providing, and maintaining all clearances within the Federal Government?
12. Would such a practice sufficiently protect the sources and methods from which the information derives while still mandating robust information exchange?

JIACGs

13. What should a combatant-command JIACG be empowered to do?
14. How large should it be?
15. What should it look like: a covert task force, a small advisory staff, a full spectrum directorate? Something else entirely?
16. For what initiatives or programs, if any, should a JIACG be the OPR?
17. Should combatant commands use an interagency executive steering group to guide the command's interagency policy, review and initiate major interagency proposals, and manage competing priorities? If so, what should its membership look like?